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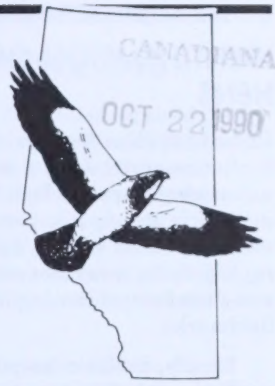
ALBERTA BIRD ATLAS NEWSLETTER



A Project of the Federation of Alberta Naturalists

Vol. 4, No. 1 | **Editor: H. Loney Dickson** | **Executive Director: Albert Brulé** | **Spring, 1990**

ISSN 0833-773X

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As a newcomer to the Alberta Bird Atlas Project, I am astounded by the scope and challenge of this important undertaking. The commitment and dedication exhibited by the hundreds of volunteers who are involved in this project is truly extraordinary and I am proud to be associated with the Alberta Bird Atlas Project and its participants.

Coming on board midway through the effort, I am both amazed by its success to date, and somewhat in awe of the work yet to be accomplished. The launching of such an ambitious project is an achievement in and of itself. The planning and organization that has gone into getting the Alberta Bird Atlas Project off the ground is remarkable. The Management Committee, volunteers, regional coordinators, atlassers, cooperating government agencies, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, and, of course, my predecessor Jack Clements, are all to be commended for their part in seeing to it that the Alberta Bird Atlas Project was given a strong and healthy start.

Now comes the bit about not resting on our laurels. (Have you ever tried resting on laurels... I imagine it might smart!)

As praiseworthy and outstanding as the work so far may be, it will all be for naught if continued and intensified effort is not exerted as we head into the final stretch of the Alberta Bird Atlas Project. There remain several challenges to be overcome if the Alberta Bird Atlas is to be a reality.

First, with the commencement of the fourth of five years of data collection, it is alarming to note that a great many priority squares have yet to be touched. Of the squares where some census work has been done, the majority appear to be only partially completed vis-a-vis the percentage of expected species confirmed. If the end product of the Alberta Bird Atlas Project is to serve as a complete and accurate reference tool, it is vital that **more volunteers be encouraged to participate, and that existing volunteers consider taking on additional squares.**

Similarly, with but two nesting seasons before us, the remote areas program continues to pose a threat to the project's aim of representing a province-wide picture of the geographical distribution and abundance of birds that breed in Alberta. The difficulties here relate to both availability of Atlassers to census remote areas, and provision of transportation and assistance in accessing remote areas. The project has benefited from help offered by government agencies and corporations, but **more help in accessing remote areas is needed.** Financially, some project participants have received support from the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation, and we are most grateful to the trustees of the fund for their commitment to the Alberta Bird Atlas Project. **The Alberta Bird Atlas Project will continue to explore additional sources of funding** to ensure that Atlassers willing to census remote areas may have some of their travel expenses offset. David Ealey has come forward to help us in planning for the balance of the remote areas program. **Anyone interested in participating in remote areas work should contact the Alberta Bird Atlas Project at 453-9163.**

Other concerns to be addressed include project financing, public awareness and volunteer recognition. These matters are being looked at to ensure that activities vital to the overall success of the project are not ignored. Fund raising efforts must be enlarged if the project is to fulfill its objectives. Greater public awareness is key to the project's aim of promoting public education and understanding of Alberta's wildlife and its management. Public awareness also serves to support fund raising activities and volunteer recruitment. And volunteer recognition —which to date has suffered from lack of funding for recognition programs and time to organize them—must be the target of renewed energy and enthusiasm to acknowledge and pay tribute to all of you who have worked so diligently on behalf of the Alberta Bird Atlas Project. **Your ideas, contributions, and willingness to assist in any of these areas would be most appreciated** and will help us to enjoy resounding success for this province-wide initiative.

I look forward to working with you and thank you for the opportunity of being a part of the Alberta Bird Atlas Project. ❑

— Albert Brulé

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

IDENTIFICATION OF DUCK HENS

Immediate identification of duck hens is often required when a nest is unknowingly approached. The following article attempts to give pointers on what to look for when a dabbler hen is rapidly flying away from the viewer and therefore presenting few fieldmarks.

Firstly, dabblers (or puddle ducks) are the group of ducks which seldom dive but tip upside down in shallow water to feed. Their legs come more out of the middle of the body and the take off in flight by springing up rather than by running. Only dabblers (although not all of them) have speculums – the iridescent or bright coloring on the secondary flight feathers of the wing close to the body.

The dabblers may be split into two groups on basis of size: the larger dabblers (from largest to smallest) include the Northern Pintail and Mallard, followed by the Gadwall, and lastly the American Wigeon and Northern Shoveler. The teals form the smaller group with the Cinnamon Teal and Blue-winged Teal being close in size and the Green-winged Teal smaller.

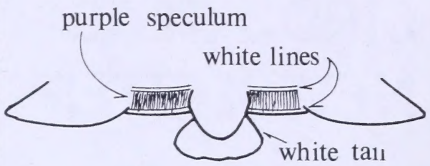
Although the range of the Cinnamon Teal is noted in bird books only for southern Alberta, it may be found breeding now considerably farther north. I have Cinnamon Teal on a square beside Edmonton, probable regular breeders on my Chip Lake and Nojack squares (near Edson) and regularly see males and females at Kiniwan Lake (north of High Prairie). The farthest north a confirmed nest was found that I know of was near La Crete. I find that if I specifically look for them I often find them.

When identifying the hens, behavior is often just as helpful as field marks. This is particularly true of the teal hens. Whenever I have come across a teal brood, the Blue-wing has often secretly left or leaves immediately with little or no distraction display and the brood is left to care for itself in a disorganized manner. In contrast, I have always seen the Green-wing do extensive distraction displays, feigning wing injury or flightlessness, as she leads me for a very long ways away from the brood. I have yet to see a Cinnamon brood but Harrison (*A Field Guide to the Nests, Eggs, & Nestlings of North American Birds*) notes that sometimes the male helps tend the brood. If so, this would be the only dabbler male that helps with the brood.

This brings us to the question of disturbance and mortality. It is documented that going up to a nest increases the chances of the female deserting and also of predation. A distraction display documents the species as breeding and it is preferable to use this than to search for a nest in most cases. If I'm not sure the duck was on a nest and it flew out from a place I can easily find without trampling any kind of path to it, I will take a very quick look for the nest while keeping an eye on the duck if it is still visible. Often I get a distraction display this way without ever finding the nest.

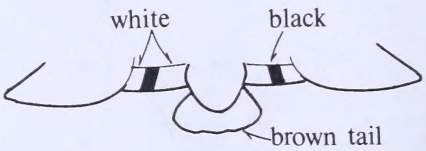
Extreme care needs to be taken when canoeing on a steam (particularly one that is narrow or without adequate cover) so that broods are not driven before you to the point of exhaustion. If you can't get by a brood, particularly of very young ducklings, stop for a while. Often you will not see them again because this has given them time to find adequate cover while you pass by.

In the following identification section, please note that not all diagnostic features are shown – only those that stand out when there is only a few seconds to see the bird as it springs up in front of you. Relative sizes are also not shown. The color of the speculum is given, although that will not always be visible in poorer light. Different hens have different calls which can be used to help identify species with experience.



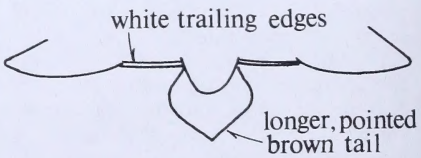
MALLARD

- loud quacks
- orange legs & orangish bill



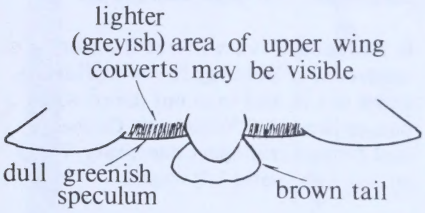
GADWALL

- nondescript brown duck
- tail looks very wedge-ish flying (compare to wigeon)
- Mallard, Pintail and Gadwall have the nests that often can be found farther from water
- Mallard, Pintail, Gadwall females generally have louder quacks than the other hens (the calls of the males vary greatly)



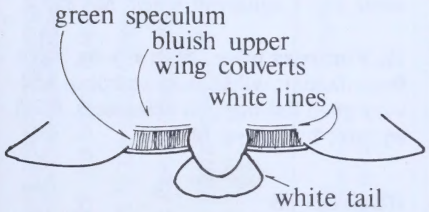
PINTAIL

- more streamlined than mallard
- largest
- bluish-greyish bill & legs



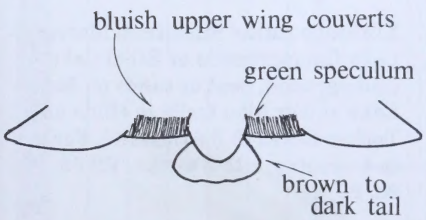
WIGEON

- female swimming close presents a *black eye* appearance like somebody punched her rather than having a darker line through the eye
- she also appears to have slightly reddish sides
- flying, her tail looks more pointed than wedged



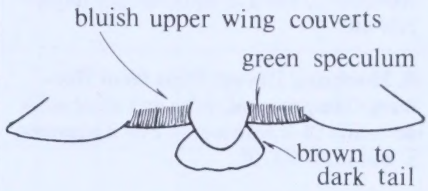
SHOVELLER

- large shovel-bill
- shovellers in groups make clucking sounds when taking off
- orange legs



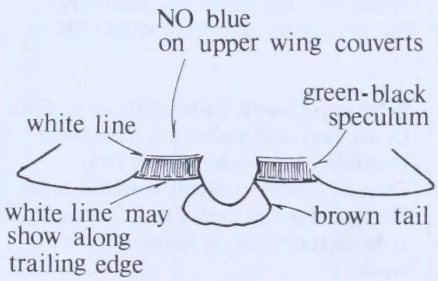
BLUE-WINGED TEAL

- ducklings have only one full stripe through eye



CINNAMON TEAL

- very difficult to ID from Blue-wing – best done with male only unless experienced with these birds
- less mottling than Blue-wing, larger bill, and slightly more reddish in appearance (differences are **very** subtle)
- eggs may have pale cinnamon tinge (reminiscent of the male coloring) unlike any other teal egg (this information is not based on an egg guide, but on Craig Wallace's and my experience in the field)



GREEN-WINGED TEAL

- ducklings have one full stripe through eye and one below eye
- excellent mother – lots of distraction displays
- a bit smaller than Blue-wing ❑

— Chel MacDonald

WILDLIFE WEEK 1990

The Alberta Bird Atlas received good exposure during National Wildlife Week (April 5-8) at the Provincial Museum. A large number of people became acquainted with, and impressed by, the project. Several potential volunteers were identified, and we hope they will become active Atlassers.

A note of appreciation is due for the volunteers who staffed the display: Olive Clark, Arlene Ohlsen, Fred Tarlton, June Seidel, Bonnie Hildebrandt, Laura Pretula, Geoff Holroyd, Jennifer Adie, Dick and Pat Clayton. As well, we want to thank the Friends of the Museum, for providing relief at coffee breaks, and also the coffee. ❑

BIRD ATLAS DAY—23 JUNE 1990

This year, Alberta Bird Atlas Day will be on 23 June 1990. If you are interested to find out what is planned for this year's events and to get involved just contact your regional coordinator or Albert Brulé, our new Executive Director. ❑

CASUAL RECORD SHEET

You will notice that we have enclosed a casual record sheet in this issue of the Alberta Bird Atlas Newsletter. It's our way of reminding you that even if you are not in your own square, or you haven't been issued a square you can still help out with the Alberta Bird Atlas. If you're out birding somewhere, send in your data, it may be that your casual record will add the final touches needed to complete a square or you might even be raising the status of breeding for a species in the area. Who knows, maybe your casual report will be the only data for the area.

Please try to fill out as much of the form as possible. But please, if you can't figure out what specific square you were in don't throw away your valuable data! Send in the form and attach a map with your birding location marked clearly. ❑

REMOTE AREA PROGRAM–1990

Priority Squares as part of remote area field trips have been selected to assist coordinators and atlassers in focussing their efforts for 1990. This is the next-to-last year for the Alberta Bird Atlas; remote areas surveyed this year will go a long way to fill in the gaps and will make the final year more manageable. If you are interested in taking part in a remote area trip, contact the Atlas office (Dave Adie or Albert Brulé) at 453-9163 or the appropriate Regional Coordinator. They can give you more information on what you will need and how to go about the planning.

REGION 04 (SYLVAN LAKE-STETTLER)

Local horseback outfitters can help with arrangements for many trips.

1. Brazeau River: Canoe or boat trip from Brazeau River Recreation Area to Brazeau Dam; intermediate skill, need canoe and ground transport (2-4 Atlassers) For up to 4 squares; 7-10 days. NJ 65, 75, 85, 95.

2. Chungo Creek Trail: Hike, horseback or 4x4 trip on trail from the Forestry Trunk Road (2-3 Atlassers). For 2 squares; 1 week. NJ 42, 33.

3. Jackfish Lake: Hike, horseback or 4x4 trip on trails from the Jackfish Lake Campground (2-3 Atlassers). Road access to campground. For 1-2 squares; 3-7 days. NJ 92.

4. Cutoff/Rocky Creek: Road access to Seven Mile Creek Campground, then hike, horseback or ATV trails in area (2-3 Atlassers). 1-2 squares; 3-7 days. NH 95.

5. North Ram River: Start from North Ram River Campground. Recreation trails in area; horseback, ATV or hike (2-3 atlassers). For 1-2 squares; 3-7 days. NH 69.

6. Cline Creek Trail: Start from David Thompson Resort, hike or horseback along trails (2-3 Atlassers). For 1-2 squares; 3-7 days. NH 38.

7. Allstones Creek/Bighorn Dam: Start from Crescent Falls Campground, hike or horseback on trail (2-3 Atlassers). For 1-2 squares; 3-7 days. NH 49.

8. Horburg River: Start from Horburg Campground, hike or horseback on trails (2-3 Atlassers). For 2 squares; 1 week. PJ 00, 01.

9. Sylvester Lake/Brazeau Reservoir: Start from Brazeau Campground. Travel on dry weather (4x4) roads, access from Forestry Trunk Road (2-3 Atlassers). For 2 squares; 1 week. NJ 94, PJ 04.

10. Rocky/Limestone Creek: Start from Seven Mile Campground, hike or horseback on trails in area (2-3 Atlassers). Possibly camp at Limestone Mountain Lookout. For 2 squares; 1 week. PH 05, 06.

REGION 06 (JASPER-EDSON)

1. Featherstonagh Creek: Start from Grande Cache, and possibly use cabins in area. Fly-in or walk from Willmore Park gate (2-3 Atlassers). For 2 squares; at least 1 week. LK 15, 16.

2. Sheep Creek Cabin: Fly-in to Cote Creek fuel cache site (2-3 Atlassers). Possible use of cabin. Start from Grande Cache, possibly combine with Featherstonagh trip. For 1-2 squares, to be determined by Atlassers. For 1 week.

3. Ptarmigan Lake: Float plane leaving from Grande Cache, wilderness camping (2-6 Atlassers). For 2 squares; for 1-2 weeks. LK 23, 34.

4. Wolverine Creek: Fly-in to cabin at Smoky River/Wolverine Creek confluence, leaving from Grande Cache (2-3 Atlassers). Possibly use 2 cabins on walk from Smoky River to Sulphur River along Wolverine Creek. Pick up at either cabin; could do in reverse order. For 3 squares; 1-2 weeks. LK 46, 55, 64.

5. Snake Indian River: Walk, ride, or ATV on trails south of Rock Lake, possibly use cabin. Start from Rock Lake Campground (2-3 Atlassers). For 2 squares; 7-10 days. MK 11, 21.

6. Berland River: Canoe Berland upstream of Wildhay River confluence, exact put in and take out points to be determined (4-6 Atlassers). Canoes and ground transport necessary. For 2 squares on route; 1-2 weeks.

7. Southesk Lake & River: Walk, drive (dry road passable) or fly-in, hike along Southesk River, wilderness camping (2-3 Atlassers). Start from Jasper or Hinton. For 2 squares; 1-2 weeks. MJ 93, NJ 03.

8. Brazeau Lake & River: Fly-in to lake and hike along Brazeau River, wilderness camping (2-3 Atlassers). Leave from Jasper or Hinton. For 2 squares; 7-10 days. MJ 90, NJ 01.

9. Geraldine Lakes: Walk-in-access from Highway 93A, south of Jasper townsite; possibly horseback (2 Atlassers). For 1 square; 1 week. MJ 32.

10. Fortress lake (BC): Fly-in, leave from Jasper; wilderness camping and very good fishing (2-3 atlassers). For 1 square; 7-10 days. MH 59.

REGION 08 (ST. PAUL-COLD LAKE)

1. Hanmore Lake: Camp at Hanmore Lake Campground, then hike, horseback or 4x4/ATV to square located on Metis Settlement (2-3 Atlassers). For 1 square; 3-7 days. VR 02.

2. Highway 697: Not really a remote trip, direct access from highway (2-3 Atlassers). Square on Metis Settlement. For 1 square; 1-2 days. WQ 49.

3. Moore Lake: Start from Moore Lake Campgrounds or Ethel Lake Campground, boat or canoe on Moore Lake and/or hike trails to Hilda and Tucker Lakes (2-3 Atlassers). For up to 4 squares; 1 to 2 weeks. VR 96, 87, 98, 99.

4. Sand River Canoe Trip: Start north of Wolf River and atlas birds while on canoe trip (4-6 Atlassers). For up to 4 squares; 1 to 2 weeks. VR 96, 87, 98, 99.

ALBERTA BIRD ATLAS PROJECT—CASUAL RECORD SHEET

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

POSTAL CODE: _____

PHONE: _____

This form is for use when away from your priority square and is to be used when submitting casual observations. Please use an Alberta Bird Atlas field form if there are more than 10 records for any one square.

REGION: _____

YEAR: 19___

	Zone	Block	Square	Observation Date	Total Hours Spent For Each Day Listed	Identifying Geographic Feature (e.g. city, lake) Near To Square	Species	Species Code	Breeding Evidence					
									O	PO	PR	CO	AB	
Example	11u	PK	10	6 Aug 89	0.25	Junction of forest trunk road and Ram River	Flamingo					NB	8	***Example***
1														
2														
3														
4														
5														
6														
7														
8														
9														
10														

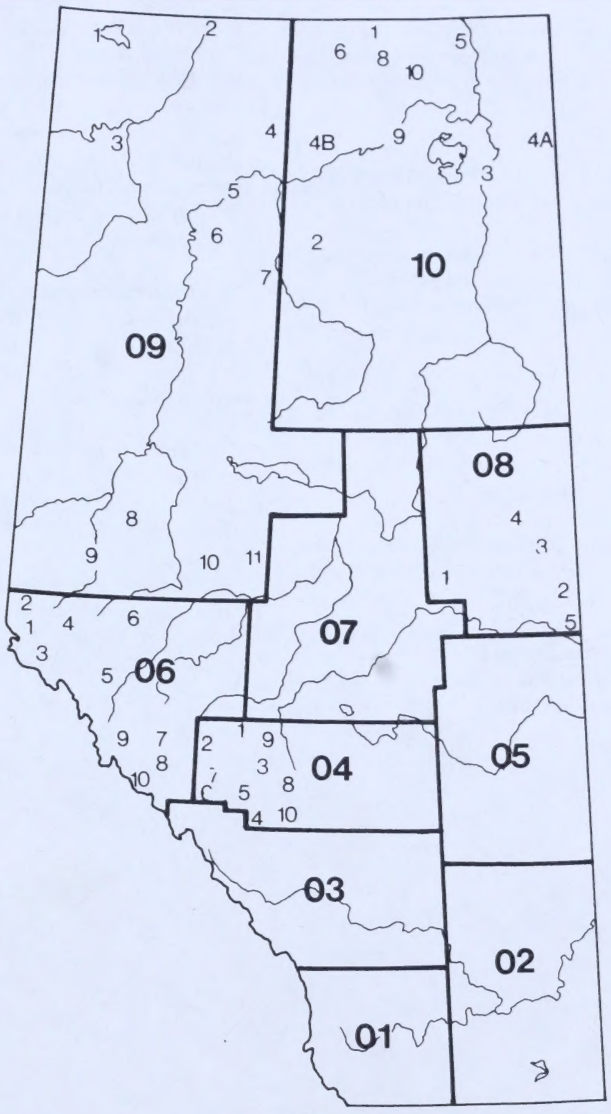
All the records on this form must relate to one region. Please return by 31 August to the regional coordinator or the Executive Director.

Please return to regional coordinator or:

Executive Director
Alberta Bird Atlas Project
c/o Provincial Museum of Alberta
12845-102 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5N 0M6

RECORD OF ATLASSERS AND EFFORT

Names of observers in party	Date	Total party hours per day
	TOTAL HOURS	



Locations of priority remote area field trips suggested for the 1990 atlassing season.

5. Fishing/Frog Lake: Start north of Wolf River and atlas birds while on canoe trip (4-6 Atlassers). For up to 4 squares; 1 to 2 weeks. VR 96, 87, 98, 99.

REGION 09 (GRANDE PRAIRIE-PEACE RIVER)

1. Bistcho Lake Lodge: Fly-in to lodge from High Level, personal transportation to High Level (2-8 Atlassers). For up to 4 squares in block LS; 1-2 weeks. LS 72, 73, 83, 93.

2. Highway 35: Drive or canoe along Hay River to Rat Lake and the Alberta/NWT border, wilderness camping, may require canoes (4-6 Atlassers). For 4 squares; 1-2 weeks. MS 94, 95 and NS 04, 03.

3. Zama Lake: Fly-in to lake, canoe lake and area, wilderness camping, may need canoes (2-8 Atlassers). For up to 3 squares; 1-2 weeks. LR 70, 80, 90.

4. Margaret Lake Lodge: Same arrangements as Bistcho Lake trip, but only 2 squares identified. NR 83, 93.

5. La Crete Lodge: Drive to lodge near La Crete. Stay at lodge and canoe/walk the surrounding area including Linton and Mustus Lake (2-6 Atlassers). For 1 priority square; 7-10 days. NQ 34 (more could be chosen).

6. Peace River: Canoe or helicopter fly-in near Peace River, wilderness camping, no trails (4-8 Atlassers). Near Wolverine and Buffalo rivers; may need canoes/boats. For 4 squares; 1-2 weeks. NP 09, 08, 18, 19.

7. Highway 67: Road access to site, camping sites available, hike through area (2-4 Atlassers). For 1 square; 2-5 days. NP 96.

8. Simonette River Canoe Trip: Canoe trip, wilderness camping; start accessed via Forestry Trunk Road (4-8 Atlassers). For 3 squares (or more); 1-2 weeks. ML 39, 48, 57.

9. Musreau Lake: Road access to camping, boat/canoe lake and surrounding lakes (2-4 Atlassers). For 1 square; 3-5 days. LL 94.

10. Iosegun Lake: Road access to Alberta Forest Service campground on lake, canoe lake (2-4 Atlassers). For 1 square; 3-5 days. NL 13.

11. Virginia Hills: Road access to area,camping sites along road to Swan Hills (2-4 Atlassers). For 1 square; 2-5 days. NL 74.

REGION 10 (FORT MCMURRAY)

1. Wabasca River Canoe Trip: Canoe trip along river, starting from North Wabasca Lake, canoe river to Loon River Junction. Need canoes and ground transport to put-in and take-out points (4-6 Atlassers). For up to 6 squares; 10-14 days. Squares to be determined.

2. Lower Wabasca Canoe Trip: Continue trip #1, either all at once or as a separate trip, depending on people and support. Canoe Wabasca

continued on pg. 6...

River from Loon River to Peace River confluence (4-6 Atlassers). For up to 6 squares; 7-10 days. Squares to be determined.

3. Athabasca River Canoe Trip: Canoe trip on river from put-in point near Embarass to lake Athabasca, wilderness camping; leaving from Ft. Chipewyan, need canoes and air transport (4-6 Atlassers). For 3 squares; 1-2 weeks. VV 75, 87 and WV 19.

4A. Old Fort Bay: Fly-in and boating on Lake Athabasca, possibly use new fishing lodge on north shore, otherwise wilderness camping. Need air or boat transport from Fort Chipewyan to lodge or Old Fort Bay, and boats or canoes (4-6 Atlassers). For 3 squares; 1-2 weeks. WA 30, 31, and WV 39.

4B. Jean D'or Prairie & Semoe Lake Campground: Road access on Highway 58 to both areas and Foggy Mountain Lookout Tower, camping at Semoe Lake Campground AFS) and trails in area for hiking (2-6 Atlassers). Need to supply own transportation. For 3 squares; 1-2 weeks. PQ 09, and PR 10, 12.

NB. Following trips depart from Fort Chipewyan, Alta. or Ft. Smith, N.W.T.

5. Wood Buffalo Road Loop: Car or 4x4 transportation around road, camping and cabins, if available (2 Atlassers). For 4 squares; 2 weeks. VB 20, 54, 63, and VA 35.

6. Snake Lake: Fly-in to lake, may require boat or canoe, wilderness camping (2 Atlassers). For 2 squares; 1 week. PS 61, 51.

7. Klewi Fire Tower: Fly-in or drive to area, camping in area (2 Atlassers). For 1-2 squares; 3-4 days. UB 34 (+).

8. Thultue Lake: Fly-in to lake, could combine with Robertson Lake trip, need boat or canoe (2 Atlassers). For 1-2 squares; 3-4 days. UB 50 (+).

9. Peace River Canoe Trip: Canoe river from Garden Creek to Peace Point, wilderness camping; possibly make into 2 trips (4-6 Atlassers). Would require canoes and equipment, ground transportation to put-in and take-out points (likely 4x4 needed). For up to 4 squares; 2 weeks. UA 31, 72, 73 and VA 35.

10. Robertson Lake: Fly-in to lake, wilderness camping in area; possibly combined with Thultue Lake trip (2 Atlassers) 3-4 days For 1-2 squares; 3-4 days. UA 89 (+).

11. South Ruis Lake: Drive in, would require boat or canoe, camping in area (2 Atlassers). For 1-2 squares; 3-4 days. UV 37 (+).

12. Penance Tower: Fly-in, camping in area; possibly combine with Ruis Lake trip (2 Atlassers). For 1-2 squares; 3-4 days. UV 77 (+).

— Dave Ealey

AMERICAN KESTREL or SPARROW HAWK
Answer to Bird Quiz #3

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH
Answer to Bird Quiz #4

Think Recycling!

Printed on recycled paper

Pensez à recycler !

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CULTURE AND MULTICULTURALISM
PROVINCIAL MUSEUM OF ALBERTA
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Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
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